

The University of Chicago

THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL
PATTERNS ON THE ADEQUACY AND
EFFICIENCY OF REFERENCE SERVICE
IN THE LARGE AMERICAN
PUBLIC LIBRARY

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ROSE B. PHELPS

DURING the war years American public libraries have found it difficult enough to carry on their work with depleted staffs, without trying to expand their services. But during this period many have been planning a reorganization and modernization which they may soon be able to execute, and it is known that some public libraries are considering complete subject departmentation. In view of this fact, the present may be an opportune time to present the results of a study of the effects of central library organization on reference service which was completed in 1943, although the materials on which conclusions are based were largely collected in 1939 and 1940. Generally speaking, the decennial year 1940 may therefore be considered the date of this investigation.

"Subject departmentation" is a term generally used to describe a form of central library organization in which reference and circulation functions are united in each of several subject departments operating on the same organizational level. Each such department has its chief and a staff of professional and clerical assistants. The chiefs of these departments may be directly responsible to the director of the library, or they may be supervised by a subordinate administrator who reports to the director. Most libraries of this type still maintain a gen-

eral reference department for ready-reference and information service, although the bulk of their reference work is performed in the special subject departments. The clerical routine of charging and discharging books may be conducted either in a central lobby surrounded by the subject departments or by clerical assistants in the departments themselves.

The utility of this type of central library organization was first demonstrated by William Howard Brett in Cleveland during the period from 1913 to 1918.² In 1913, when the Cleveland Public Library moved into rented quarters in the Kinney and Levan building on Euclid Avenue, Mr. Brett divided his book stock into subject units which combined circulation and reference materials and thus established specialized reference divisions, all of which are functioning today.³ The only additions to their number

² This experiment was not without its forerunners. In the plan which William Frederick Poole proposed for the Newberry Library in 1881 (*The Construction of Library Buildings* [U.S. Bureau of Education, "Circulars of Information," No. 1.]) it was suggested that the book collection be housed in several separate subject rooms, but, since this was to be strictly a reference library, no combination of circulation and reference functions was involved. In the Providence Public Library, completed in 1900, three departments situated on the third floor, the Art, Music, and Industry departments, combined circulation and reference materials and service and were all originally supervised by a custodian of special libraries (Providence Public Library, *Twenty-third Annual Report*, Dec. 31, 1900, p. 6).

¹ A summary of a dissertation submitted to the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in December, 1943, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

³ Most of the information concerning the organization and service of the libraries considered in this paper has been taken from their annual reports.

have been the John G. White Library of Folklore and Orientalia and a Business Bureau. The development of subject departmentation in Los Angeles resembles that in Cleveland, but its evolution has been more gradual and much less definite and purposeful. However, it is the Los Angeles Public Library which has been adopted as the best example of this form of organization, partly because it is the only completely subject-departmentalized library in the United States, having abolished its general reference department in 1927.

The original study on which this paper is based may be described as a comparative case-study of three libraries, each representing one of the major types of public library organization found in the larger American cities. Its purpose was to discover which type of organization provides the most adequate and efficient reference service for the large American public library. To represent the functional type of organization, the St. Louis Public Library was selected; Los Angeles Public Library is the example of the subject-departmental type; a third type, referred to as the mixed type, which is particularly common in the eastern United States, is exemplified by the Boston Public Library.

Though this study deals largely with forms of internal organization of central libraries and with their capacity to produce an adequate reference service, it should not be assumed that the sociological differences in metropolitan communities which affect the use of library facilities have been totally ignored. The racial composition, educational achievement, and occupational interests of the population of a city undoubtedly influence its reading. Likewise, the city's standing as a financial, commercial, industrial, religious, and educational cen-

ter may vitally affect its use of reference facilities. A brief survey of these sociological factors in each of the three cities shows that they differ in many respects, and that, on the whole, Boston and Los Angeles probably furnish a somewhat better field for the development of library service than does St. Louis. However, an assumption with which this study was begun, that no public library, however successful, has as yet developed its reference service to the point where the potential demands of the public are fully supplied, still appears to be justified, and internal improvements in organization and better public relations may therefore be expected to produce increased use.

In order to simplify the presentation of this subject for the benefit of public library administrators and students of library administration, and to condense the contents of the study sufficiently for periodical publication, this report will begin with a brief description of the organization of each of the three central libraries; it will then proceed immediately to present the chief findings which deal with the use of reference facilities and the relative costs of service in each library. The more important conclusions of earlier chapters which investigated the effect of organization on the administration of central library service, on circulation and reference personnel, and on book collections are briefly summarized in a final section which seeks to explain the possible reasons for the greater adequacy and efficiency of the subject-departmentalized library.

ORGANIZATION

Los Angeles.—In 1940 the Adult Education Department of the Los Angeles Public Library (see Fig. 1) was the only wholly functional department exclusive-

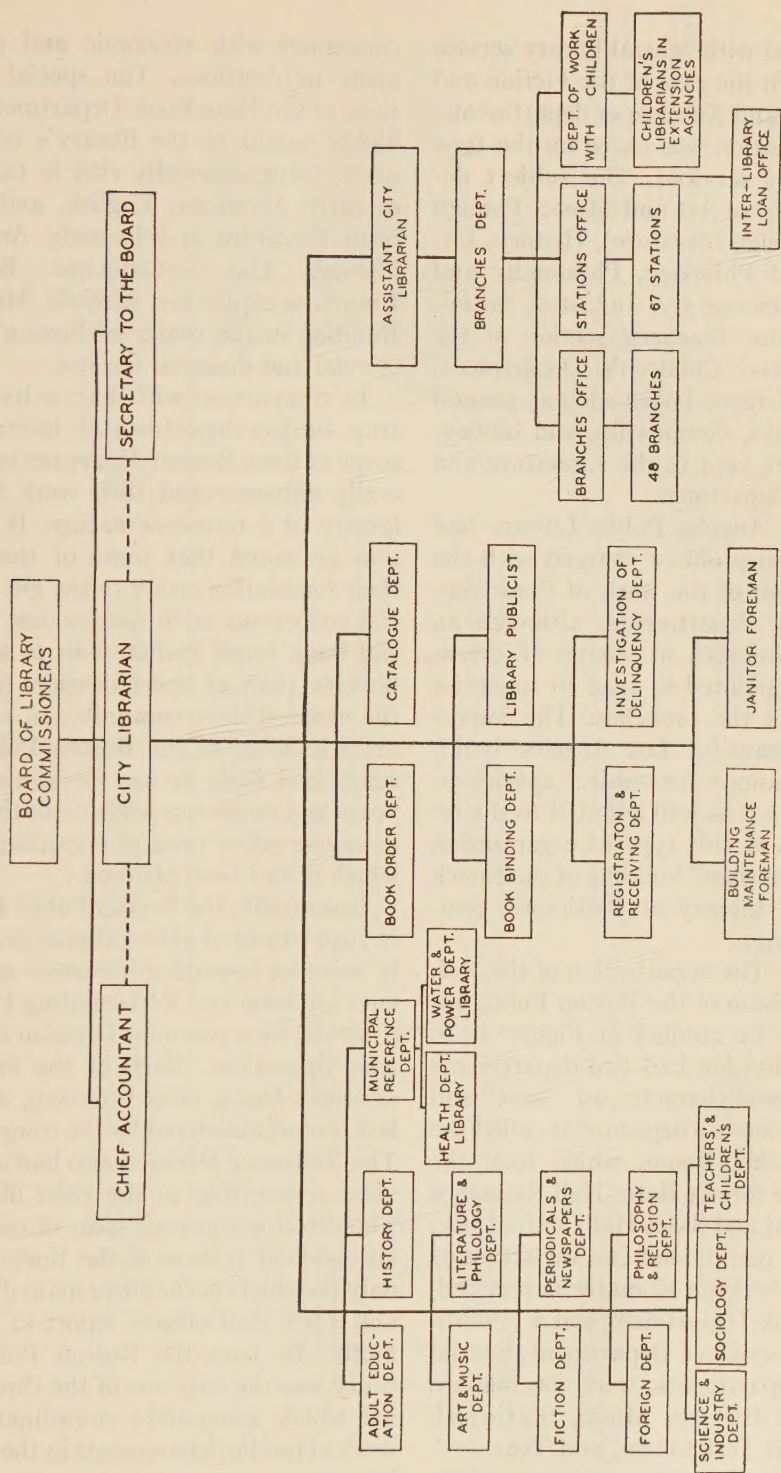


FIG. 1.—Organization of the Los Angeles Public Library, 1940

ly concerned with central library service to adults. In the case of the Fiction and Periodicals and Newspaper departments, departmentation was based on the type of materials serviced. The subject departments were Art and Music, Foreign (largely foreign literature), History, Literature and Philology, Philosophy and Religion, Science and Industry, Sociology, and the Teachers' section of the Teachers' and Children's Department. General reference books such as general encyclopedias, dictionaries, and bibliographies were kept in the Literature and Philology Department.

The Los Angeles Public Library had no supervisory officer charged with the co-ordination of the work of these central library departments, although an assistant librarian in charge of extension was appointed in 1940 to supervise the work of the branches. The imposing and beautiful Los Angeles building was planned for subject specialization but is not as well adapted to the requirements of this type of organization as the "open-plan" building of the Enoch Pratt Free Library at Baltimore, completed in 1932.

Boston.—The organization of the Reference Division of the Boston Public Library may be studied in Figure 2. In 1940 this division had two departments of a functional character, an "issue" and a general reference department called the Main Reading Room, which took the place of the former Bates Hall Reference Department and Bates Hall Center Desk. It likewise maintained two departments based on the type of material serviced, a Rare Book Department and a Periodical and Newspaper Department. Special subject departments were as follows: Fine Arts, History, Music, Statistical, Science and Technology, and Teachers'. The Statistical Department was chiefly

concerned with economic and government publications. The special collections of the Rare Book Department were highly useful in the library's reference work, being especially rich in the fields of early American, English, and European literature and in early American history. The well-stocked Business Branch occupies the Kirstein Memorial Building in the center of Boston's commercial and financial district.

In comparison with like units in the true subject-departmental library, the scope of these Boston departments is generally narrower and their work is more largely of a reference nature. It should also be noted that some of them owe their foundation either to the gift of special collections or to the bequest of special book funds rather than to any deliberate plan of specialization to meet the needs of the community. In 1940 the main building of the Boston Public Library had been in use for almost fifty years and tended to perpetuate the rather conservative type of organization for which it had been planned.

Essentially, the Boston Public Library in 1940 consisted of two almost completely separate operating libraries—a Reference Division and a Circulating Division—served by a common Division of Business Operations. Each of the first two divisions had a chief librarian, and the last was administered by the comptroller. The Reference Division also had a supervisor responsible to the chief librarian. The director's narrow span of control is an excellent feature of the Boston plan: only the chiefs of the three main divisions and a few staff officers report to him directly. In 1940 the Boston Public Library was the only one of the three studied which adequately co-ordinated the work of public departments in the central library.

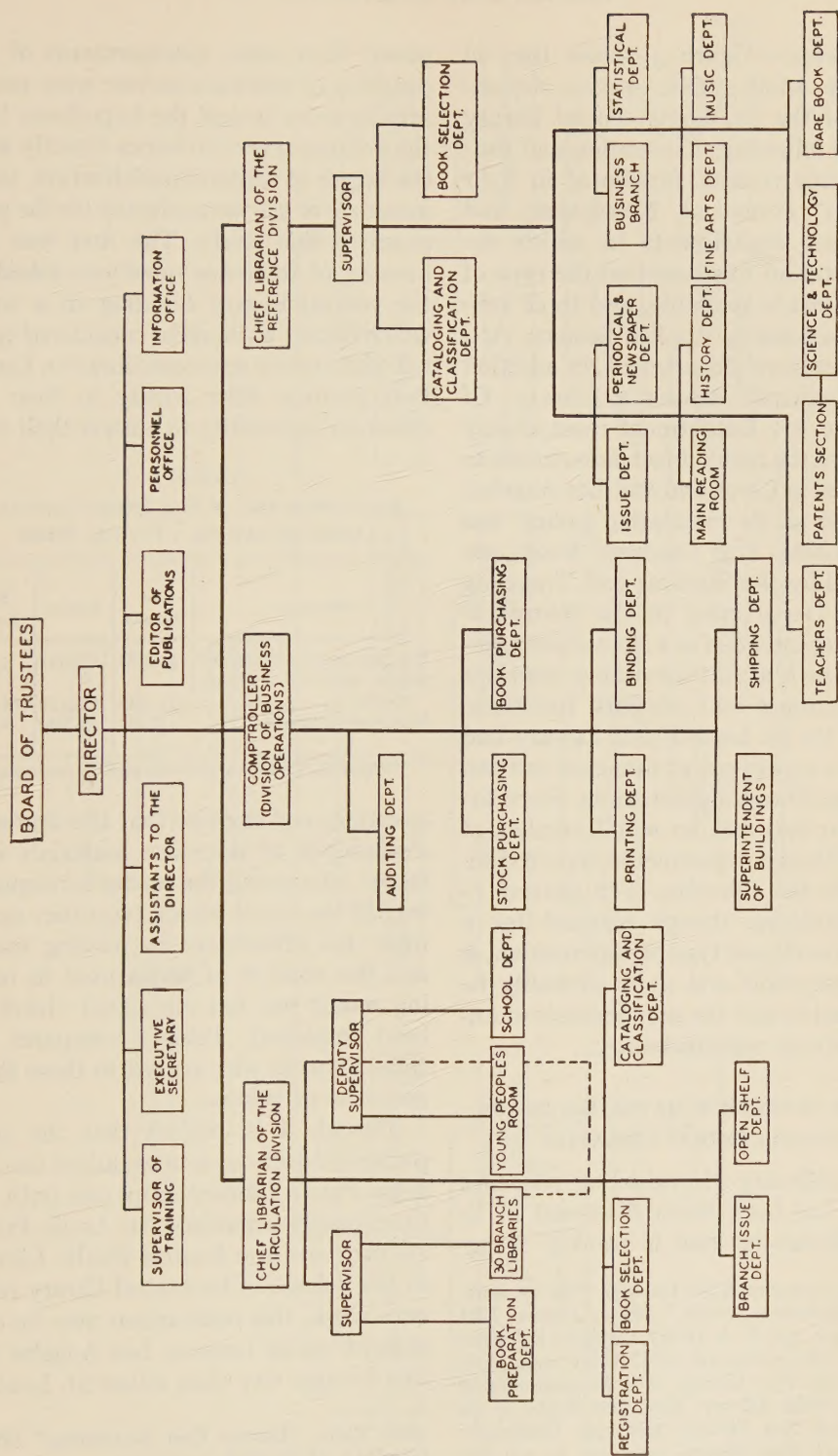


FIG. 2.—Organization of the Boston Public Library, 1940

St. Louis.—Figure 3 shows that in 1940 the adult public service departments of the St. Louis central library were the following: Circulation and Reference departments, functional in their character; Periodical, Newspaper, and Open-Shelf departments in which departmentation was based on the type of material made available, and three subject departments, Applied Science, Art, and a Teachers' department, in addition to a Municipal Reference Library. Of these the Art Department most closely resembled the true subject department as developed in Cleveland and Los Angeles, inasmuch as its circulation policy was fairly liberal. The Teachers' Room, established by the Stations and Traveling Library Department in the central library, was intended as a circulation agency, but such a unit inevitably develops some reference and advisory functions. In 1940 the St. Louis Public Library had neither a supervisor of branches nor one of central library departments. Some fifteen branches and an equal number of central library departments reported directly to the librarian. The central library building, though planned for a largely functional type of organization, is fairly adaptable and could probably be converted to suit the requirements of another type of organization.

USE OF REFERENCE MATERIALS IN THE
THREE CENTRAL LIBRARIES

The difficulty of evaluating reference service has been much discussed in library literature⁴ and is frankly recog-

⁴ See for instance: Edith Guerrier, "The Measurement of Reference Service," *Library Journal*, LXI (July, 1936), 531; E. A. Henry, "Judging Reference Service," *Library Journal*, LXIV (May, 1939), 358; Enoch Pratt Free Library, *The Reorganization of a Large Public Library: Ten Year Report of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, 1926-1935* (Baltimore: Enoch Pratt Free Library, 1937), pp. 43, 45; Fre-

nized. Since some measurements of the quantity of reference service were necessary in order to test the hypothesis that the volume of service varies directly with the degree of subject specialization, three measures of use were selected for the purposes of this study. The first was the number of reference questions asked in the central library building in a week which library authorities considered typical. Since every reference librarian knows that patrons differ widely in their inclination and ability to answer their own

TABLE 1
REFERENCE USE OF THE THREE CENTRAL
LIBRARIES DURING A TYPICAL WEEK

Measures	Los Angeles	Boston	St. Louis
Reading-room attendance	41,982	17,951	5,748
Books used in reading rooms.	37,743	13,350	11,253
Reference questions*	11,225	3,699	2,169

* Figures do not include questions asked by telephone.

questions and likewise that the degree of availability of reference materials is a factor influencing the reader's independence in the use of books, two other measures—the attendance in reading rooms and the number of books used in reading rooms but not circulated—have all been employed. Table 1 compares the three libraries with regard to these three measures of volume.

Though it is evident that the completely subject-departmentalized Los Angeles Public Library surpasses both the functionally organized St. Louis Public Library and the Boston Public Library in the volume of its central library reference work, this comparison may be considered unfair because Los Angeles is a much larger city than either St. Louis or

mont Rider, "Library Cost Accounting," *Library Quarterly*, VI (October, 1936), 379.

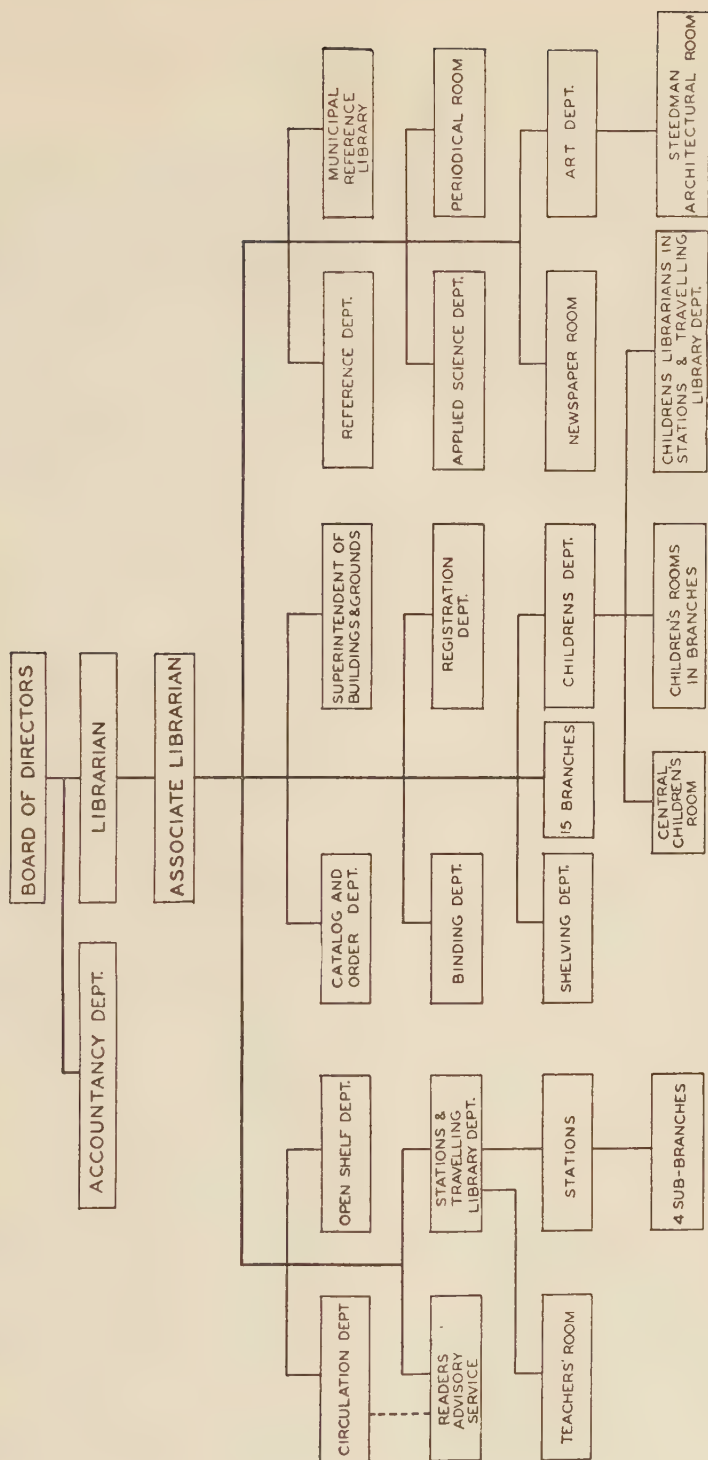


FIG. 3.—Organization of the St. Louis Public Library, 1940

Boston.⁵ To make a just comparison, annual per capita estimates of use based on figures presented in Table 1 have been made for each of the three measures used. These are presented in Table 2. These figures show not only that the subject-departmentalized Los Angeles Public Library leads the group in the volume of its central library service but that the three libraries rank in the order of the degree of subject specialization which they have achieved.

TABLE 2
ESTIMATED ANNUAL PER CAPITA USE OF
REFERENCE FACILITIES IN THREE
CENTRAL LIBRARIES

Measures	Los Angeles	Boston	St. Louis
Reading-room attendance	1. 75	1. 54	0. 45
Books used in reading rooms.....	1. 57	1. 145	0. 886
Reference questions.....	0. 467	0. 317	0. 171

Another measure often employed in studies of this type is the proportion of the number of reference questions to the number of books circulated during a given period. Table 3 presents data on this point. Though the subject-departmentalized Los Angeles central library has attained a relatively large circulation as contrasted with that of St. Louis, its reference service has grown even more rapidly. The highest proportion is shown by the Boston Reference Division, but this appears to be due to the highly conserva-

tive attitude and practice of this division with regard to the circulation of its books.

Table 4 serves to sharpen the contrast between the subject-departmentalized and functional type of organization by omitting the library representing the mixed type; it likewise summarizes the findings of this section of the report.

While this study does not afford conclusive evidence on the relative quality of reference service in the three representative libraries, some information on the character of service was obtained. The large amount of special indexing done by clerical assistants in the Los Angeles departments appears to have secured for it the quickest service of the three. Statistics compiled from 1,048⁶ question blanks, covering the more important and difficult reference questions asked in each library during a typical week, suggest that it is probably true that the subject department uses more highly specialized reference tools than does the general reference department. Subject departments in all three libraries also made greater use of research and statistical materials than the St. Louis Reference Department, a fact which suggests that the subject-departmental library may be a better instrument for the dissemination of knowledge than the functionally organized library. Of the three libraries studied, the Boston Public Library was the largest user of scholarly printed bibliographies, while the Los Angeles Public Library made the greatest use of indexes and bibliographies created in the library itself. A comparison of interlibrary loan statistics showed that the Boston Public Library is by far the greatest lender of the three, possibly be-

⁵ In 1940 the population of the three cities was as follows: Los Angeles, 1,504,277; Boston, 770,816; St. Louis, 816,048. But since this investigation deals exclusively with adult service, the population over 15 years of age in 1940 has been used in these estimates. For Los Angeles this figure is 1,250,054; for Boston, 606,040; for St. Louis, 660,372. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population*, Vol. II, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part 1, *United States Summary* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 121, 132-33, 143.

⁶ Of these, 482 were from the Los Angeles central library, 290 from the Boston Reference Division, and 276 from the St. Louis central library.

cause its rich special collections have been so fully described in printed catalogs.

Summary.—The preceding figures comparing the use made of the various forms of central reference service appear to justify the hypothesis that the subject-departmental type of organization provides the most adequate service. It has been shown that the use of the reference service in the three libraries generally corresponds to the degree of their specialization, the Boston Reference Division, with its numerous subject

COSTS

Judged by the criterion of public use, the foregoing section has shown that the subject-departmental type of organization provides better reference service than the functional and mixed types. The present section seeks to determine whether subject departmentation is more expensive than the other types and, in particular, whether it is more efficient, in the sense of producing a greater volume of service for a given expenditure. It should be noted that the findings of this study cannot be considered wholly con-

TABLE 3
RELATION OF THE NUMBER OF REFERENCE QUESTIONS ASKED TO THE NUMBER
OF BOOKS CIRCULATED DURING A TYPICAL WEEK IN THE
THREE CENTRAL LIBRARIES

LOS ANGELES			BOSTON			St. LOUIS		
Number of Reference Questions	Circulation	Per Cent	Number of Reference Questions	Circulation	Per Cent	Number of Reference Questions	Circulation	Per Cent
11,225	27,672	40.6	3,699	7,013	52.1	2,169	6,659	33.0

departments usually standing much closer to the completely subject-departmentalized Los Angeles central library than to the functionally organized St. Louis central library. Although the evidence on the quality of reference service in the three libraries is by no means conclusive, its general trend is to favor the libraries of the subject-departmental and mixed types. As has been previously stated, other factors, such as the quality of library staffs, the educational level of the city's population, and the financial support the library receives contribute to the greater reference use in Los Angeles. But when all these factors are considered, it is still impossible to imagine that so great a volume of service could result from a simple functional organization.

TABLE 4
PER CAPITA MEASUREMENTS OF SERVICE IN
THE LOS ANGELES AND ST. LOUIS
CENTRAL LIBRARIES, 1940-41

Measurement	St. Louis	Los Angeles	Approximate Ratio St. Louis to Los Angeles
Attendance.....	0.45	1.75	1:4
Books used in reading rooms.....	.886	0.57	1:2
Circulation.....	.506	1.423	1:3
Reference questions..	0.171	0.467	1:3

clusive because only the two major costs—personnel and printed materials—have been investigated. The relative costs of processing materials⁷ and of housing cen-

⁷ In the newer "open-plan" building designed for the subject-departmental type of library, separate

tral library departments in the three representative libraries have not been investigated.

It is also essential to point out that all costs of central library personnel include both circulation and reference service. Since circulation and reference functions were inextricably combined in the majority of public departments of both the Boston and Los Angeles libraries and in several of those in the St. Louis library, it was found impossible to separate the

The cities of Boston and St. Louis, which are of comparable size, differed markedly in the amount expended on their public libraries, the amount spent in Boston being nearly two and one-half times as great as that in St. Louis. The average expenditure on the Boston Public Library even exceeded that of Los Angeles, a city approximately twice its size.

Total cost of salaries and books in circulation and reference departments.—

TABLE 5

TOTAL COST OF SALARIES AND BOOKS FOR CIRCULATION AND REFERENCE DEPARTMENTS OF THE THREE CENTRAL LIBRARIES, 1935-39*

YEAR	LOS ANGELES			BOSTON			ST. LOUIS		
	Salaries	Books, Periodicals, and Binding	Total Operating Expenses (System)	Salaries	Books, Periodicals, and Binding	Total Operating Expenses (System)	Salaries	Books, Periodicals, and Binding	Total Operating Expenses (System)
1934-35†	\$193,430	\$48,303	\$ 926,406	\$195,000	\$ 82,272	\$1,104,202	\$63,571	\$30,914	\$465,785
1935-36	196,230	75,755	1,006,144	205,053	92,423	1,248,328	65,272	33,570	472,333
1936-37	184,330	70,227	1,036,217	216,888	100,531	1,329,567	66,373	34,591	474,355
1937-38	187,660	66,862	1,068,173	241,077	130,849	1,383,861	67,581	37,296	489,183
1938-39	193,400	68,102	1,077,032	248,936	161,563	1,391,169	67,316	30,203	505,556
Average	\$191,010	\$65,850	\$1,022,794	\$221,391	\$113,528	\$1,309,425	\$66,023	\$33,315	\$481,442

* Source: For statistics of total operating expenses, annual reports of the three libraries; for departmental expenses, statistics furnished by accounting or order departments of each library.

† In the Los Angeles Public Library the fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30; in St. Louis it begins on April 1, but figures for Boston are for the calendar years from 1935 through 1939.

costs of these two types of service. Likewise, only departments which serve adults have been considered in this study; the cost of central library service to children is not included in any of the figures except those which deal with total library expenditures.

ABSOLUTE AND PROPORTIONAL COSTS

Total operating costs.—During the thirteen-year period from 1927 through 1939 the average annual expenditure of the three libraries was as follows: Los Angeles: \$1,145,251; Boston: \$1,262,708; and St. Louis: \$528,258.

subject-department catalogs are not considered absolutely necessary for public service.

Table 5 presents statistics secured from the accounting departments of the three libraries which show the cost of salaries and of books, periodicals, and binding for public departments of each of the three central libraries during the five years previous to 1940. For purposes of comparison the total operating expenditures are also included in the table. This table shows that on central library costs the three libraries rank in the same order as on total expenditures, Boston being first, Los Angeles second, and St. Louis third.

Proportional expenditures for central library circulation and reference departments.—It is often charged that the sub-

ject-departmental type of organization is unduly expensive,⁸ and there are several different methods of approaching the investigation of this question. One of these is to inquire what proportion of each library's salary-and-wage fund and what proportion of its general fund for books, periodicals, and binding is expended for these adult circulation and reference departments in the central library. By using the data contained in Table 5 and additional figures showing the total amounts expended for each purpose in each library system during the years 1935-39, the results presented in Table 6 have been obtained. It will be noted that while the St. Louis Public Library devotes about one-fifth of its salary-and-wage fund to the service of these central library departments, the Boston and Los Angeles libraries both spend about a fourth of their personnel money on them. This difference is considerable, but, as has already been shown, both of the last-mentioned libraries do a much larger volume of work in proportion to the size of the city served than does the St. Louis Public Library. Moreover, it can hardly be contended that a quarter of the library's personnel fund is too much to devote to salaries for the staff of the central library which performs such important circulation, reference, and research functions.

Table 6 also shows that the proportion of the book fund used for printed materials for the central library is quite similar in St. Louis and Los Angeles, but much higher in Boston. In neither St. Louis nor Los Angeles could the money available for books, periodicals, and binding be considered adequate to the li-

brary's needs; only in Boston was the central library book fund ample for the purpose. Probably the reason why the ratio of the central library fund to the total book fund is so high in Boston is that, while gift and endowment funds provide a sufficient income for book-buying for the Reference Division, branches are almost wholly dependent on city appropriations, and in recent years comparatively small amounts have been spent on books for the branches.⁹

TABLE 6
PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURES FOR SALARIES
AND BOOKS ALLOCATED TO CENTRAL CIR-
CULATION AND REFERENCE DEPART-
MENTS (AVERAGES: 1935-39)

PURPOSE	LOS ANGELES	BOSTON	ST. LOUIS
	Percent- age	Percent- age	Percent- age
Salaries and wages. . .	25.0	24.1	19.4
Books, periodicals, and binding.	38.9	54.5	36.3

The conclusion reached in regard to proportional costs is that, though the subject-departmental library probably requires a larger share of the library's total salary-and-wage fund, it may not require a much greater share of the book fund, and that the larger proportion of total library expenditure which it consumes may possibly be justified by the greater amount of service which it is capable of supplying to the public. Further evidence on this point will be presented hereafter.

⁸ See Althea Warren, "Departmental Organization of a Library by Subject," in *Current Issues in Library Administration*, ed. by C. B. Joeckel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 122, 124.

⁹ Serious concern over the inadequate book funds provided for branch libraries was expressed by the Examining Committee (an advisory citizens' group) to the Board of Trustees in 1939. See Boston Public Library, *Annual Report, 1939*, pp. 22-26, 30-31.

DIFFERENCES IN OPERATING COSTS IN TERMS OF SERVICE RENDERED

Thus far absolute and proportional costs of central library service have been discussed, but no measurement of costs in terms of service demanded and performed has been undertaken. Since it is possible that a large volume of service will have the effect of decreasing unit costs of operation, it is important to devise some such measures. The two measures proposed, the per capita cost of central library service and the cost per unit

of books, periodicals, and binding is very small, and the difference in cost is relatively slight. Compared with all costs in Boston—that of salaries, of books, periodicals, and binding, and of these combined—the costs in Los Angeles and St. Louis are so moderate that the difference between the two seems of little importance and hardly worth emphasizing. Judged by per capita as well as by absolute costs, it appears that the library of the mixed type which supports both strong functional departments and nu-

TABLE 7
PER CAPITA COSTS OF CENTRAL LIBRARY SERVICE IN
THE THREE LIBRARIES, 1939

Cost or Percentage of Cost	Los Angeles	Boston	St. Louis
Total per capita cost of library service.	\$ 0.717	\$ 1.80	\$ 0.62
Per capita cost of central library service (salaries, books, periodicals, and binding).	.174	0.532	.12
Per capita cost of salaries, central library circulation and reference departments.	.129	0.324	.083
Per capita cost of books, periodicals, and binding in central library.	0.045	0.208	0.037
Percentage which per capita cost of central library service forms of total per capita costs of library service.	24.3	29.6	19.4

of service, are indeed somewhat arbitrary and provide only a rough approximation of relative costs. Taken in conjunction with each other, however, they furnish some basis for judgment as to the comparative efficiency of the three types of organization.

Cost per capita of central library service.—Table 7, based on figures already presented in Table 5, gives per capita cost of central library service, including salaries, books, periodicals, and binding in the year 1939. It shows that the per capita cost of salaries for the circulation and reference departments of the central library is a little less than half again as great in Los Angeles as in St. Louis. In both of these libraries the per capita cost

merous subject departments is the most expensive to operate. The per capita cost of the subject-departmental type of organization, though somewhat greater than that of the functional type, is by comparison very moderate.

Cost of a unit of service rendered.—Costs of central library personnel for public departments, as given in Table 5, embrace both the cost of circulation and reference service because, in a study of libraries so differently organized, it was found impossible to separate the costs of types of service which are at many points so closely associated with each other. If a unit cost of service is to be used, it must therefore be one which can be used to

measure both circulation and reference work.

A recent study of costs in thirty-seven American public libraries¹⁰ shows the average cost in time spent on a reference question to be four times the average cost in time taken for the circulation of a book. If this proportion of four to one be taken as a standard, the number of reference questions asked during a given period should be multiplied by four and added to the circulation for the period, and the cost of personnel for circulation and reference purposes should then be divided by this weighted measure of service. The period used in this calculation was the year 1939, and the estimate of the number of reference questions for the year was based on the proportion of reference questions to circulation in a typical week of that year. When this calculation is employed in the three libraries the resulting approximate cost of a unit of service in each is as follows: Los Angeles: \$.042; Boston: \$.154; and St. Louis: \$.093.

The unit cost of service is again the highest in Boston, but it is over twice as high in St. Louis as in Los Angeles. This estimate taken together with figures on per capita costs shows that with the great expansion of both circulation and reference service which accompanies subject departmentation, the per capita cost of central library personnel naturally increases, but the unit cost of service may be greatly decreased.

SUMMARY

Assuming that the three libraries selected for study are fair representatives of their types of organization, one may

justly conclude that, of the three, the subject-departmental type is the one best adapted to securing adequate and efficient reference service for the large public library. The functional type of organization, examined in the St. Louis central library, appears to be inadequate to supply the needs of so large a city, while the mixed type of organization exemplified by the Boston Reference Division, though more nearly adequate to its task, is very expensive. Of the three, only the subject-departmental form of organization, exemplified by the Los Angeles central library, proved to be capable of providing for a large expansion of reference service at a low unit cost.

WHY SUBJECT DEPARTMENTATION PRODUCES A MORE ADEQUATE AND EFFICIENT SERVICE

Though it is perhaps impossible to give any simple explanation of the greater potentiality of the subject-departmentalized central library for securing a satisfactory reference service, experience and observation tend to suggest that certain of its features and characteristics are well adapted to producing a service which is at once efficient and adequate. Many of the following statements, particularly those concerned with personnel and book collections, could be supported with statistical data, but for the sake of brevity the evidence is omitted. Those characteristics of subject departmentation which are thought to have increased the volume of reference service are ranged under the heading, "Adequacy"; those which it is judged have contributed to economy will be found under "Efficiency."

ADEQUACY

1. The subject-departmental type of organization furnishes an ample frame-

¹⁰ Emma V. Baldwin and William E. Marcus, *Library Costs and Budgets: A Study of Cost Accounting in Public Libraries* (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1941), p. 175, Table IV.

work within which reference service adequate to the needs of the population of a large city may evolve.

2. The subject-departmentalized library arranges for the display of a large proportion of the library's live, valuable, and interesting books on open shelves in departmental reading rooms, and thereby stimulates both home circulation and self-service in reference work.

3. In the functionally organized library the reference department favors a conservative circulation policy in the interest of its own service; in the subject-departmentalized library, where reference and circulation functions are united in each department, both types of service develop harmoniously without crippling each other.

4. To a certain degree specialization by subject divides the library's clientele into manageable segments, with like interests and preferences, and enables the library to reach the individual through service to the groups and associations which fall within the scope of each of the subject departments. Such an organization also promotes well-directed and effective publicity in specialized subject media.

5. The subject-departmental library develops a strong group of subordinate executives, interested in public service and capable of valuable assistance in library planning. This group also constitutes an able book-selection council, since the chief of each subject department possesses an intimate knowledge of the reading habits and requirements of patrons in his subject field.

6. Whatever the basic form of the library's organization, the creation of a subject department improves the library's holdings of printed materials in the subject field. In the functionally organized library this tendency of the iso-

lated subject department to strengthen its collection slightly disturbs the balance of the collection as a whole. In the completely subject-departmentalized library the same tendency at work in every department produces a general improvement in the quality of the library's holdings and secures a proper balance in the representation of various subjects.

7. Both observation of library collections and service and the checking of book lists in the three libraries would suggest that book selection in the subject-departmental library is probably more practical and utilitarian in its character than in libraries of either of the other types.

EFFICIENCY

1. Subject departmentation divides the universal field of the general reference department into fairly homogeneous sections and thus encourages the professional staff of each department to master the bibliography and literature of its subject field. The result is increased intelligence, skill, and speed in dealing with reference questions, and a consequent decreased cost per unit of service.

2. The subject-departmental public library has shown a disposition to economize by making a proper distinction between professional and clerical duties. It has set up appropriate standards and qualifications for both professional and clerical positions, and thus secured personnel with suitable education and training for both types of positions.

3. Since specialized reference service interests a larger proportion of a city's population than does the service of the functional reference department, it provides for a more continuous and therefore a more economical use of the valuable time of librarians who man the reference desks.

4. In subject departments clerical assistants, under the supervision of professional librarians, have achieved a thorough organization of knowledge through the creation of countless special indexes, bibliographies, and files of ephemeral materials. The greater speed and efficiency of subject-departmental service stems in part from this thorough organization of information and from the employment of other labor-saving methods and devices.

5. The subject-departmental library, with its many like units on the same or-

ganization level, produces a friendly rivalry between departments which results in unusual staff interest in the continuous and accurate evaluation of the library's public service.

6. The subject-departmentalized public library with its more ample provision for clerical service, its wider sharing of authority and responsibility, and its more vital public contacts appears to be capable of developing a more active and dynamic professional staff than either of the other types of organization studied.

